

# Africo-American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii, 35.

VOL. L.

CHARLOTTE, N. C., THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 1928.

NO. 2.

## MEMORIES OF OTHER DAYS

### THE EARLY DAYS AT BIDDLE AS I RECALL THEM.

By J. E. Rattley, Class of '77

(Reprinted from Johnson C. Smith University Alumni Journal)

(These observations are purely from memory, and, therefore, there are few dates, and there may be a few slight errors because I have stated some things from hearsay; say, events prior to 1869.)

Under the auspices of the Presbyterian Board of Missions Biddle Memorial Institute was organized at Charlotte, N. C., in the year 1867, directed by Revs. Willis L. Miller and Samuel C. Alexander. The former, I learn, was a native North Carolinian; the latter a native of Pennsylvania, who, though espousing the cause of the Union, held the pastorate of the Steel Creek Presbyterian church (white), prior to and I think during the Civil War.

Mr. Alexander married a Miss "Nannie" Price, of a sturdy Presbyterian Steel Creek family, who, though Southern born, held with her husband in his allegiance to the Union, and proved an able helper in his subsequent labors to elevate the colored people.

As I was told, the early sessions of this Institute were conducted in the colored Presbyterian church (now Seventh Street church), a long, rough, "strip" structure, located in the portion of Charlotte known as Logtown (now Brooklyn.)

Biddle at this time was necessarily nothing more than a preparatory school. I might even say elementary, though most of its students were mature men, many past middle age. Most of these men were in training for the Presbyterian ministry, taking an English course in theology specially adapted to supply the then urgent demand for a colored clergy.

One of the pleasures of recollection to me is centered about those first students, among whom were Abner B. Lawrence, James A. Phifer, James Peoples, Calvin McCurdy, James W. Alexander, George W. Patterson, Matthew Ijams, Isaac Stevenson, A. Pinckney White, Benjamin F. McDowell, Frank L. Montgomery, Eli Walker and Magager G. Hoskins. Revs. Hoskins and McDowell, as far as I know, are the only survivors of that sturdy vanguard of theologues that gave tone and character to the then Biddle Memorial Institute. Rev. Hoskins was then one of the finest looking, best dressed, politest, most popular of students at the Institute, and a social "lion" in the city.

These early days in the life of Biddle are recollections pleasant to me because I entered there at the age of fourteen, somewhat advanced in studies over many of these older theologues, and far in advance of many full-grown men not taking theology. I was the only boy resident student, and most of the men took me on "a social equality," and my, how a boy enjoys the society and confidence of a full-grown man! I am now 72 and the pleasure of looking back to old Biddle runs a riot of real pleasure through my whole being.

In April, 1869, I went to Charlotte, entering the Presbyterian Parochial School, taught by Miss Margaret Miller, my former teacher at my home, Franklinton, N. C., and the above-mentioned Mrs. S. C. Alexander, of the Steel Creek (Southern) Presbyterian church. This school closing late in the summer, gave me three or four months to "rub up" in prepara-

tion for the sessions at Biddle which opened in October.

As I remember, at this time there were only two regular instructors at Biddle, the one, Rev. S. C. Alexander, who managed affairs, and a Mr. Blandin, a very earnest and much beloved Christian gentleman, who, though white, made the older students his sole companions. Rev. Miller, who at first seemed the Principal, had now gone from the school and I never saw him.

In 1870 Rev. Stephen Mattoon, D. D., came as our first President. Dr. Mattoon was a recently returned missionary from the Kingdom of Siam, where he and his most beloved wife had served for about two decades.

With the coming of Dr. Mattoon Biddle can date its organization as a college and theological seminary and soon thereafter was chartered a university. From now on, one after another, came a fair quota of professors, some of whom being of the Alumni of Princeton, Harvard and Yale, helped to formulate a curriculum for Biddle, as near as possible, in line with those great universities. Nearly all of the instructors were highly appreciated by the students for their kindness, scholarship and exalted Christian character, some, of course, standing out prominently, as, for instance—

Prof. Mosaman, whose forte was his very successful teaching of geology, mineralogy and botany; and

Prof. John Haskell Shedd, a returned missionary from Persia, who spent his spare time in his large market garden with the same efficiency as he filled his chair in Greek.

Prof. Shedd, as did the President and other ministers of the faculty, preached nearly every Sunday at some one of the many churches of the countryside, for none of these had a regularly ordained colored pastor, not even Seventh Street church, which was then ministered to by Dr. Mattoon.

Prof. Shedd was a great preacher—not eloquent, but intensely earnest and possessed of a marked, joyful, Christlike humility. He it was who founded "The Southern Evangelist," the first organ of Biddle, and that oldest so-called Negro Presbytery—The Catawba.

A short time prior to Prof. Shedd's return to mission work in Persia, Rev. D. J. Sanders, (not yet D. D.), then pastor of the colored Presbyterian church at Wilmington, N. C., took over "The Southern Evangelist," which he consolidated with his own weekly and named it "The Africo-American Presbyterian." Now comes to my mind Prof. Samuel J. Beatty, the healthy, ruddy-faced, taciturn one; but behind his taciturnity resided a mind equal to the exacting duties of his class-room. Old timer, can you ever forget Mrs. S. J. Beatty, the professor's better nine-tenths? She was so handsome, so magnetic, so pleasant, so musical. She had a very slight "lisp" which added charm to her cheery converse.

What I say of Mrs. Beatty I can say of many of the wives and daughters of the members of the faculty. There was a refining, moral influence which helped to give Biddle of that day its remarkably high moral standing.

Mrs. Beatty led the Chapel music, singing her inimitable contralto which was a delight

to Biddle and Biddleville. I say Biddleville, because then there was no Presbyterian church in the village, and on Sunday nights the villagers thronged to the university chapel, where services were conducted by some member of the faculty.

Who of the men of that day will not thrill at the bare mention of Prof. Robert N. Hall—that man skilled in mathematics and mental philosophy—the defender of Christianity against the attacks of agnostics and atheists. Ingersoll and his type of infidels who showed lack of deep reasoning he handled with satire; but for the evolutionist of the Herbert Spencer, Thomas Paine, Darwin and Huxley type, he sifted their learned reasoning, and cannonaded their unorthodox conclusions with raking philippics. He was the Judas Maccabeus of the faculty in the fight against Christian infidelity, which so often insinuates itself in a student body.

Hall was so profound, forceful, and eloquent an orator that not even the "bad" student could be led to "cut" his chapel sermons. He was a man of unflinching courage in all things and often dared to do and say things that no one but "Ole Hall," as he was lovingly called by us, dared.

I don't suppose there are many Biddle men now alive who know there was ever a Professor Talmon C. Perry on its faculty. Well, there was, and I mention him because he was such a pious man and was said to be so wealthy that he gave most of his services without financial remuneration.

There was Hartzell, the handsome, immaculately attired Harvardite; he was no fop, but a strong man, exacting nothing short of the very best from every student.

And how can I pass and not mention among the notables, Niece, the tutor? To my mind, though not classed as a professor, his learning in the languages was the most erudite. I think his first post as teacher, after his graduation from Yale, was at Biddle. He was very exacting in the students' rendition of Greek and Latin into the choicest English and an adept in teaching Latin prose composition. Dr. Wyché no doubt remembers that Mr. Niece, though a learned linguist, could never remember to call his name aught but Mr. Wyché.

At the outset I spoke of the Mattoons in a general way; now particularly. Dr. Mattoon came in the full vigor of robust manhood. He towered above the man of average height, carrying his well-developed, well-proportioned body with the majestic mien befitting the Olympian Jove.

Although he moved majestically, he moved with agility, seeming to be utterly devoid of one single "lazy bone." His capacious head, with its full thatch of hair, sat impressively above his broad shoulders in nature's ideal style.

Mentally and physically he was strong. The first day with us he impressed us with his strong personality, and in a few short months was the directing force in Catawba Presbytery; this not of his own seeking, but from a natural inclination of us mortals to pay deference to a master mind.

His hand was ever on the pulse of the higher courts and commissions of the Church and so profoundly was he grounded in Church History and "The Confession of Faith" that he was the expounder of Presbyterian law and regularity.

As President of Biddle Dr. Mattoon was the impersonation of industry, impartiality, moral-

ity and piety; and while in no way could he condone moral laxity, he was so humane. Many were the "nicknames" given him by the students, but the one that predominated was "The Champion." To the imagination of "us boys," Dr. Mattoon could never have been a child, but Minerva-like, he sprang full-grown Dr. Mattoon.

As a citizen Dr. Mattoon stood high, for though he came to us at a time when white teachers of colored people were held in rather poor esteem by the native whites, his superior qualities as one of nature's nobles were so exemplified that it was not long till he was appreciated by all classes of citizens at his true worth.

Now, finally, Mrs. Laura Mattoon. Mrs. Mattoon was an institution at Biddle. Then we had to Mattoon and she made herself a mother to every student who in any way needed motherly ministrations. With her tears and infusions she was ever on hand to combat measles and mumps. With her good cheer and incomparably benignant smile, she encouraged the discouraged ones and with her prayers, exhortations and Bible passages she changed many wayward ones to righteousness.

Mrs. Mattoon taught for some time in the preparatory department, and at all times of her activity directed the University Sabbath school. The Bible was her chief textbook, and few were the students who did not commit to memory "The Sermon on the Mount," "The Lord's Prayer," "The Ten Commandments" and the Christian Armor.

Mentally, I can now see the letters in old English letters she had placed centrally on the wall back of the chapel rostrum, "The Bible the Chief Book in our Schools Forever." On the right of this The Ten Commandments, and to the left, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

Mrs. Mattoon confined her activities not solely to the university, but she was active in community uplift, and by her inimitable feminine appeal everwarded off evils that were defiant to masculine opposition. She was slight in build and even of delicate health, but she possessed and practiced the virtues that make a robust soul.

Not long after my graduation in 1877 Mrs. Mattoon passed to her exceeding great reward. Dr. Thomas Lawrence in conducting her funeral rites spoke of her modest, beautiful girlhood. She was described as the winsome Mary Laurie. Since then I never hear the song, "Annie Laurie," that I don't think the composer of that classic might have written a more beautiful song if he had but known Mary Laurie.

She was laid to rest on a hillside overlooking the Biddle site. Her desire was, that her active pall bearers should be entirely of "her boys," as she called the Biddle students.

She was ever my best friend, and to her sainted memory I dedicate these lines:

Would but the muse inspire my tongue  
To sing her countless graces;  
I'd strike my lyre and sing and sing  
In varied tones and paces.  
Thus when I'd sung a hundredth lay  
In varied tones and measure,  
I might e'en then her memory show  
Our heart's eternal Treasure.

A true and broad culture should heighten our enjoyment even of such a material thing as food. It should increase our delight in a sunset, a landscape, a country lane.

## TELL HOW CHURCH CAN HOLD SER- AID LABOR TO SECURE RIGHTS.

(From The New York World)

"The great task confronting the clergymen of America is to swing the churches back into the struggle for the rights of the masses," the Rev. Dr. Tippy of the Federal Council of Churches, told the Congregational Industrial Seminary in Broadway Tabernacle yesterday.

"The churches must rededicate themselves to the 40,000,000 manual laborers in the United States," he went on. "It is important that the churches be in the forefront for the welfare of struggling people such as the miners. We need the co-operation of all denominations in all such struggles to show that the churches are active."

As one way in which to get action, Dr. Tippy suggested that the young people's and women's clubs and the Sunday schools be interested in the work.

Dr. Tippy, with the Rev. Edward L. Israel of Baltimore, Chairman of the Social Justice Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, were chief speakers at the afternoon session of the seminar, which had for discussion the topic, "The Church and Industry; What Can Be Done in and Through the Church?"

Dr. Israel told the seminar that the "church has talked in generalities too much and has not particularized enough."

"With the exception of a few leaders," said he, "there is an absolute lack of understanding of what concrete application of religion means to the social life of America. Most preachers dwell upon idealism, but they do not bring religion to industry nor industry to the church."

"The church is constantly making excuses for its neutrality. We are not neutrals. We stand for a definite concept of human rights, for collective bargaining, for fair hours of labor, and we do not have to apologize for it. There is, however, a difference between neutrality and impartiality."

"The churches should stop spending their time passing resolutions and adopting programs and devote more time to specific industrial conflicts. On that score there should be a greater intelligence in the rank and file of the ministry. Until the time comes when a man can go into the pulpit and apply himself directly to a case without having to apologize to his Board of Directors or fear the loss of his position, or play politics we will get nowhere."

The Rev. Dr. George J. Becker of Bayonne, following Dr. Israel, declared the churches lacked contacts with the masses in the industrial East and Middle West.

"We've got to develop a new type of minister," said he. "We must create a ministry of industry."

At the morning session, the Rev. George E. Haynes spoke on the Negro in Industry, and Harry W. Laidler of the League for Industrial Democracy, spoke on Present Trends of American Industry."

### NOTICE.

District No. 2, of McClelland Presbyterian Missionary Society will meet Sunday, January 22, at 3:30 o'clock, at Mt. Zion church, Due West, S. C. Representatives from each Missionary Society in the District are urged to be present, as this will be a business meeting.

Publicity Committee:  
MISS LUCINDA H. WHITE,  
Abbeville, S. C.,  
MRS. MARIE B. ROGERS,  
Anderson, S. C.

Dear Editor:—Please allow me the space in your valuable paper to tell a few things about our splendid services held here recently at St. John Presbyterian church, Fremont, N. C., by Dr. Isaac H. Russel, of Durham, and our pastor, Rev. A. H. George, of Wilson.

Despite the rain and cold our services were well attended and every one was held spellbound throughout his discourse each evening of his series of sermons. Dr. Russel is a powerful, gospel speaker. He will bring joy to your soul and tears to your eyes if you hear him. We had wonderful services throughout his stay with us and five young men were added to our church. We are indeed proud of these young men and there is plenty of work for them to do. They are all splendid young men and the highest type of citizenship. They all have a great future before them.

These young men are Messrs. Jasper Newsome, Sylvester Hagens, Luke Morrissey, H. W. Newkirk and Charliet Edwards. We were indeed glad to have Dr. Russel with us and our doors stand wide open for him any time he may wish to come this way.

Rev. George has been our pastor for seven years and not only the members of our church but members of all churches, and every one else are glad always to see him. Rev. George was called from us two years ago to take up other work and every one asked us, if possible, to keep Rev. George, and we were advised by the Board of our Church to appeal to the

Committee on Supply of our Presbytery to allow Rev. George to remain with us. We are indeed proud of him, and the Elder and Deacon Boards of our church met with a great surprise on Christmas Eve, when we were greeted with a large package containing various kinds of confectioneries to be shipped to Rev. George and family by the Ladies' Home Missionary Society of our church. The Boards of our church then joined in to make it a complete send off.

Miss Willie Hargrave, of Wilson, a teacher in our Junior High School here, has played an active part in the Missionary Society and church work in general along with the other members. We are proud of Miss Hargrave and our entire teaching staff. They all take an active part in church and Sunday school work.

Mrs. L. J. Foster, of Goldsboro, who is also a teacher here, did her part in rendering splendid music for us during Dr. Russel's stay with us. We were also glad to have Dr. C. Dillard of Goldsboro, with us during our meeting.

Our collections were splendid for the meeting. We raised \$40. Two prizes were given to the ones contributing the highest sum in our collection. The first prize was won by Mrs. Cora Outlaw, which was a picture of Dr. Russel, by contributing the sum of \$2.05. The second prize was the Africo-American Presbyterian for one year, which was won by the Junior High School teacher staff by contributing the sum of \$2.55. This prize was given by Dr. Russel.

We understand that Dr. Russel will be in Goldsboro during the week of January 2nd, and we would be very glad if he could run up to Fremont during his stay there.

ISAAC W. LEE.

If you keep a good joke to yourself two days you'll find that everybody's heard it.